

Conducting a Radon Challenge

One way to stimulate action on radon is to capitalize on friendly rivalries that exist in your community by having schools or other rival organizations issue radon challenges to each other. The ideas below are written with a radon challenge between schools in mind, but can be tailored and utilized for challenges between other organizations such as sports teams or merchants.

What is a Radon Challenge?

A radon challenge is when one group of people challenges another to find out which one can conduct the most radon tests in a specified time. It can be an effective way to encourage families to test their homes for radon. Keep in mind that the challenge can be applied to as big an area – school, neighborhood, or city – as your organization has the time and resources to support.

Steps to Take to Initiate a Radon Challenge

1. Contact a radon test kit manufacturer (a list can be obtained from your state radon office) and arrange for them to supply kits, perhaps at a discounted price, for challenge participants. The manufacturer may agree to supply the kits for free as long as he or she can recover costs through the results analysis fee to be paid by each participating family.
2. Identify four or five schools in your area that you would like to participate. This activity is appropriate for all levels of schools, from grade school through high school. You may wish to start with more schools than you need, in case some drop out.
3. Write to the administrators of those schools, encouraging them to participate and identify a teacher who will take the lead on the challenge. The letter should contain the following general points:
 - < request school's participation in radon challenge;
 - < briefly explain what radon is and what its health effects are;
 - < mention timing the challenge with National Radon Action Week;
 - < tell them you are also contacting other area school administrators requesting their participation;
 - < list the basics of what's involved in the challenge, including the support to be provided by your organization;
 - < say that you'll be in touch to discuss the proposal in person.

You may also wish to refer to other letters in this supplement for text ideas.

4. Supply the teacher/coordinator at each participating school with the following:
 - < test kits;
 - < educational materials on radon;
 - < fact sheets on radon;
 - < a note to parents about the challenge.

The note to parents should contain the following general points:

- < explain the school's involvement in the radon challenge;
- < briefly explain what radon is and what its health effects are;
- < explain what the challenge entails, what will be asked of them, and what support will be provided.

You may also wish to include some of the 'radon messages that work' from those listed in the document in this supplement called "Key Points for Spokespersons."

5. Make contact with and offer to assist the teachers/coordinators in any way that you can. This may involve providing a speaker on radon or offering to provide volunteers to distribute materials.
6. Arrange for the administrators from the participating schools to formally issue the challenge to each other at the beginning of National Radon Action Week. (See "**Sample Text for a Radon Challenge**" that follows this list) In tandem with issuance of the challenge, notify the press by phone and mail (see the document in this supplement entitled "**Sample Release to Announce your Radon Activities**"). Invite members of the press to an "opening ceremony" for the challenge, perhaps to be held at a community building or park. Include members of the student publications staff at each participating school. Be sure to provide all members of the press with those materials you provided to challenge participants.
7. Keep track of the number of radon test kits received by the manufacturer for analysis. Be sure each test kit or package is coded by school, so that they can be easily tallied.
8. At the end of the challenge, announce the number of test kits ordered from and returned to the manufacturer. You may wish to assign more points for finished tests and fewer for test kit orders. It may also be more fair to choose a winner based on percentage of the student body whose families tested for radon or ordered kits. This way larger schools do not automatically have an advantage. Announce the radon challenge winner and inform local media. You may consider announcing the winner at a small 'closing ceremony' where representatives from each participating school are present and available to the media for comment on the challenge.
9. Try to get a local retailer to donate a prize for the winning school, such as books, computers, sports equipment, audio-visual equipment, etc. Be sure to also publicize the retailer's donation of the prize along with the announcement of the winner.